

**DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION**

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October 29, 2008

John Helms, Chairman
Jackson Demonstration State Forest Advisory Group
222 Hall Drive
Orinda, CA 94563

Dear Chairman Helms:

I have received and reviewed the Jackson Demonstration State Forest Advisory Group (JAG) report, "Recommended Late Seral Forest Development Prescription for the Camp Three Timber Sale." I am grateful to the JAG members for their complete and timely completion of this task, which was called for in the Jackson Demonstration State Forest (JDSF) Settlement Agreement. I want to thank you and the other members of the Late Seral Forest Development Committee for the dedication you have shown in completing this task, along with your earlier recommendations for Brandon Gulch.

The Camp Three Timber Sale, per the terms of the Settlement Agreement, provides a more complex situation than Brandon Gulch, due to the requirements for:

- The amended Timber Harvesting Plan (THP) shall be treated as an applied research project in [acceleration of the development of late seral forest conditions](ALSF).
- Development of baseline resource inventories shall be focused, practical, within available CAL FIRE resources as determined by the Director, and able to be accomplished by April 1, 2009.
- Ongoing monitoring shall be focused, practical, and within available CAL FIRE resources as determined by the Director.
- More than one approach to ALSF shall be applied within the amended Camp Three THP area.

The Settlement Agreement language represents a negotiated outcome among the parties. This is not the optimal approach for designing scientific research studies. For example, the Settlement Agreement requires a contiguous area to be set aside for receiving no treatments, effectively establishing the control area for the experiment without any experimental design considerations. Ideally, multiple control areas are interspersed between the treatment areas in order to be able to compare each treatment with a control.

The foregoing limitations, in combination with the current limitations of Demonstration State Forest Program staff and budget, along with the need to keep the harvesting process moving for the timber sale contract holders, resulted in language being placed in the Settlement Agreement to stress the applied nature of the research and the stipulation that research related inventorying and monitoring be "focused, practical, and within available CAL FIRE resources as determined by the Director."

Harvest Prescriptions

The recommendations of the JAG regarding the ALSF silvicultural prescriptions to be applied call for harvesting 30 percent of basal area on two portions of the timber sale area and 45 percent of basal area on a third area, as indicated in the Camp Three Report and the map contained therein. These prescriptions are generally reasonable and within the general direction provided by the Settlement Agreement. They also are consistent with the mission of JDSF.

The timber harvest prescriptions to be applied to the active management areas of the Camp Three Timber Sale THP appear to provide an approach to timber management that accelerates the development of late seral forest conditions, while addressing the area's important recreation values. I find that the JAG's recommendations are consistent with my interest in ensuring that there is an exploration of the degree of compatibility between recreation and management for accelerating late seral forest conditions.

Research

The Camp Three Report identifies an appropriate null hypothesis regarding the acceleration of late seral forest conditions. The Report describes a range of parameters that are appropriate for testing this hypothesis. The choice of parameters of interest is appropriately guided by practical considerations during layout and implementation of the experiment, and should not be cast in stone during the planning stage. The combination, intensity, and frequency of the measurement of these parameters should be subject to the discretion of JDSF professional staff as the Camp Three ALSF experiment moves forward over time.

Per the Camp Three Report recommendations, inventory/monitoring plots will be established in the Control Area and in Areas B and C. Approximately 15 continuous forest inventory type plots will be established in each of these areas to estimate the specific changes in parameters of interest over time. These plots will create a substantial workload for local staff, recognizing that this represents the equivalent of 30 percent of the total number of permanent plots currently established across the entire Forest and periodically measured to monitor long-term growth. The final number of plots to be installed will depend on the subset of the parameters of interest chosen by staff, and practical on-the-ground considerations. The layout of plots will be decided upon by staff after spending time on the ground remarking the THP and laying out the treatment areas.

The Camp Three Report specifies a range of plot-based late seral characteristics and transect-based associated variables to be measured to test the experimental hypothesis. The key question is the "minimum [number of plots] needed to effectively test the experimental hypothesis and to provide an understanding of change in ecological condition and acceleration of late-seral forest conditions."

Due to the high cost of installing and monitoring complete CFI plots (\$700-\$1,000 per plot), staff plans to install some basic permanent CFI-type plots for hypothesis testing, measuring only the variables needed to quantify the key parameters of interest, nominally tree species, diameter, and possibly some heights. For monitoring purposes, we plan to measure, on a periodic basis most or all of the factors listed on page 25-26 in the Camp Three Report. Given our current staff and financial resources, we envision being able to install three to five full CFI plots out of the 15 in each the Control and Areas B and C. This approach yields a total of 45 plots in the Camp Three THP area, with about 15 full plots and 30 basic plots.

The Camp Three Report identifies six baseline and monitoring factors (epiphytes, reptile and amphibian populations, small mammal populations, ground cover floristics including invasive species, mushrooms and fungi, soil duff and topsoil) that "may be incorporated depending on staff capacity and funds available." Current staffing and funding are not adequate to allow collection of all of these data at this time, nor is there sufficient time available to adequately quantify pre-treatment conditions related to most of these factors. Staff will undertake a focused effort to collect these data as staff and financial resources permit. In the near term, staff will be committed to measuring duff, flora (including invasive species), and reptile/amphibian presence.

JAG has set up a committee to study the cost of the research activities that are undertaken on Camp Three. JDSF will support this effort with available staff resources.

The Camp Three Report specifically recommends that research associated with the ALSF treatments be stimulated by an allocation of at least \$30,000 for research projects or grants. This amount of State Forest funds will be made available for research grants on Camp Three between now and the end of the 2009 calendar year. Additional funds are likely to be available in future years.

Special Considerations

The Camp Three Report addresses a significant list of "special considerations" for Camp Three. Two of these items are addressed here because I am directing action differ from JAG recommendation or clarifications are needed.

JAG recommends that the new hiking trail, required by the Settlement Agreement to be laid out but not built should, in fact, be built after the completion of the Camp Three harvest. I believe that significant new trails, such as this one, should not be built unless identified as a priority as a part of the recreation planning process to be carried out as identified in the JDSF Management Plan and the JAG Charter.

The Camp Three Report recommends that biological diversity of flora and fauna be evaluated prior to each stand entry. JDSF has ongoing processes for conducting marbled murrelet (where habitat is present; there is no suitable murrelet habitat in the Camp Three area), northern spotted owl, and botanical surveys for listed species prior to harvests. Survey protocols are established and surveys conducted in consultation with state and federal agencies. Management on JDSF goes beyond just surveying for these species to include the consideration of ensuring the diverse and healthy ecosystem processes that support them. These surveys and management approaches can address many of the major flora and fauna concerns for the older forest conditions that are being cultivated on Camp Three.

Given the current time, budget, and staff limitations, for the 2009 harvest entry at Camp Three, JDSF staff will assess for northern spotted owl and listed botanicals, as well as install several bird survey plots for species presence. In the future, when time and resources are less constraining, JDSF will conduct more in-depth assessment of species presence.

Demonstration, Interpretation, and Education

The area around the Camp Three Timber Sale area is heavily used for recreation, making for excellent opportunities to educate the public about forest management activities, including the Camp Three treatment goal of accelerating the development of late seral forest characteristics. As noted in the JAG Camp Three Report, the Settlement agreement states, "There shall be included in the protocol a plan for educating the public, including persons using the area for recreation."

I concur that the proposed recreation trail, if eventually built, provides an excellent opportunity for self-guided demonstration, interpretation, and education on forest ecology and stand dynamics in the context of accelerated development of late seral forest conditions. This information would be complementary to the information provided on the Brandon Gulch hiking trail.


JDSF staff will develop at least one station, providing basic interpretive information on the Camp Three area treatment and goals, at the western edge of the area, where recreationists are most concentrated. An informational brochure will be provided here with the brochure including a professionally developed questionnaire to "...gauge public reaction, over time, to understanding the role of forest management in providing a balance between diverse forest values including wood, jobs, recreation, ecological values, forest recovery/stand dynamics after thinning, and acceleration of late-seral conditions," per the JAG Report's recommendations.

I am directing CAL FIRE staff to further develop and implement the above steps, and others pertinent to the JAG's recommendations for Camp Three, including amendment of the THP. Staff will report regularly to the JAG on their progress in completing this work and will consult with the JAG if further clarification of the JAG's intent is needed.

John Helms, Chairman
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I want to reiterate my thanks to you and to the members of the JAG for their completion of this important task, while continuing to make good progress on the many other responsibilities of the JAG.

Sincerely,



RUBEN GRIJALVA
Director

cc: JAG Members
Stan Dixon, Board of Forestry & Fire Protection Chairman